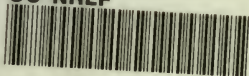


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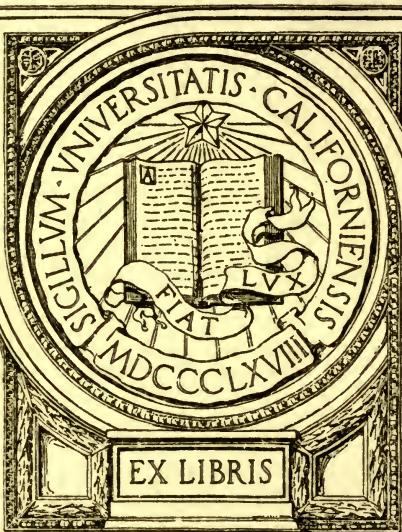
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Back Home

BACK HOME

BY
CHARLES PHILLIPS

Far off thou art, yet ever nigh:
I have thee still and I rejoice:
I prosper, circled with thy voice:
I cannot lose thee tho' I die!
—Tennyson.

SAN FRANCISCO
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1911

MAIN

DEDICATION
TO ALL WHO LOVE, AND LOVING
UNDERSTAND

255379

"WHERE MOTHER IS, IS BEST."

Sure as the wingéd arrow shoots,
Straight as the crow flies west,
Unerring as the eagle sweeps
The heavens to his nest,
My heart sends all its wishings home—
"Where Mother is, is best."

When Fortune smiles in this fair land,
And all the world is dressed
In sunny garb, and all the skies
Smile at my soul's glad zest,
Oh, then would I go singing home—
"Where Mother is, is best."

And when the gloom and shadows come,
And, faltering in the test,
I fail, and fain would lean upon
Some heart for strength and rest,
Ah, then my heart turns wearily,
"Where Mother is, is best."

Where Mother is, there Heaven is,
There all the charms possessed
Of peace and joy and dear content
Await at love's behest—
Where mother is my heart would stay—
"Where Mother is, is best."

Yes, I would bring my burdens home,
And lay my head at rest
In her dear lap; or singing bring
The fairest fortunes guessed
In our long dreams, to make her glad!
"Where Mother is, is best!"

God keep her safe among those scenes
Of home so dear, so blest!
O, long as love and mem'ry live,
And long as Faith's confessed,
My heart will cry to all the world,
"Where Mother is, is best."

PART I

Stay, stay at home, my heart, and rest,
Home-keeping hearts are happiest.
The bird is safest in its nest:
To stay at home is best!

—Longfellow.



BACK HOME

NO, I do not forget. For all my
days
Are thronged with thoughts of
you, my evening hours
Are filled with recollections. Day and
night
My comings and my goings all are
sweetened
And pleasant made with memories of
you.
Now even as I write to bring you near
With chronicles of old home days, my
heart
Is sudden clamorous made with many
thoughts
As if, with yearning's eager, hurried
hand
I threw the door of all the past wide
open
And started all the trembling wings of
memory
To rushing flight and swift returning
welcome.
Ah, well they know me, these dear
doves of memory,
And clamorous they beat their wings
around me,
Till, in the soft onrushing music made
By the attentive flutter of their wings,

I hear a strain of sweet familiar voices;
Till, in the cloudy hypnos of their wing-
ing,
Mine eyes see visions of old scenes I
love.

If the drowsed solace of the dreaming
pipe
Were mine, how languorously now
might I
Lean back upon the soft surcease it
brings
And give the curling smoke free will to
weave
Its visionary pictures! But the sound
Of memory's persistent wings is none
The less inviting, tho' I sit alone
In smokeless solitude. Nay, but I sit
Apart from all the life about me, living
A part in other days. No little thing
Here in this room, so far from home,
but speaks
Of home and you. Father, I never hear
The sound of building and of saw and
hammer,
But am reminded of the days you built,
And we, your boys, were early let from
school
To bring your dinner pail. I wonder
now
How often we took furtive "peeks" be-
neath
The cover of that pail to see if doughnuts

Were tempting there, in brown, sweet,
 odorous richness?
Even the table that I write upon
Speaks of the little home-made desk of
 pine
You made for us—that wondrous treas-
 ury
Of slates, and pencils, and geographies,
And, in the later years, repository
Of “Poultry Heralds” and the “Bee
 Journal,”
And neatly stored-up housewife’s handy
 things.

Ah, but I love that little old pine desk,
And many a time my heart goes longing
 back
To the dark evenings when my little
 lamp—
The smallest lamp of all, the only one
That had a pedestal—showed me the
 way
Thro’ Arden forest and Verona’s streets,
And lit the page of Lear’s wild stormy
 story.
For it was at that desk I, elbows crook’d,
And eager-eyed, and on the chair’s sharp
 edge,
First learned the lore of Shakespeare.
 Ah, what worlds
Of wonder Avon’s bard has shown me
 since

Those days of Charles and Mary Lamb!
What desks
Of night-hour study and of swift day toil
I've delved and scribbled at since those
first hours
Out in the kitchen. Then I never
stirred
Till from the living room the call, thrice
given,
Came for the evening prayer. And if,
sometimes,
I told my Rosary beads with thoughts
far off
In English lanes or on the bright Rialto,
'Twas but a child's rejoicing in discovery
Of fairy worlds that he prayed Heaven
to open.

Softly! I hear them now—those evening
prayers,
And the swift sounds of memory's wings
become
The mingled voices of the Rosary.
First, mother's, low and even—and the
prayers
From her dear lips sound now the sweet-
est music
My ears will ever hear;—then father's,
low,
And in his voice something of solemn
chant.
So one by one, with lowly reverence
The sacred mysteries were told—and
proudly,

If I so hap was chosen to repeat
Some of the prayers. Ah, vesper voices,
calling

Forever to me from the deathless past,
I hear you and I heed your treasured
message!

Voices of by-gone days, where sound ye
now?

One is uplifted in the Eternal Chorus;
One, of that Mary named for her whom,
suppliant,

We begged sweet intercession, still is
breathing

Prayers for us all, tho' foreign bound-
aries sunder;

One, of the little sister, lifts to-night
A pleading prayer, upon the western
plain;

One is to-night with yours again com-
mingled

In evening prayer. And one—ah! since
I know

No blessing breathes there that I do not
share in,

With all the joy that being remembered
brings,

And all the sorrow separation makes,
One voice, I cry to you across the moun-
tains,

Is lifted up in prayer and blessing on
you,

In praise to God for all the gifts He's
given;

And chiefest of those gifts the un-
measured bounty
Of your dear love and care and constant
blessing!

No, I do not forget!
You live and move in all my work and
pleasure,
And would that words could measure
half the motive
Of good you daily give me. Think you,
father,
That the long, weary days of toil and
labor,
Of sweat in sun-hot fields, of cold and
hardship
In winter days, were lost? And you, my
mother!
In one the truest wife, the dearest
mother
A home has ever hidden! Think you
ever
The burdens you have borne, the cares
you've carried,
The sorrows you have hidden in your
heart,—
Think you these all, my mother, have
been only
The weight of crosses? Nay! if on your
soul
They have perforce weighed down, upon
your children
They sit as crowns, with all the signal
uplift

Of coronals! And in our hearts we
carry
The greatest heritage that man may
claim—
Sonship to a great mother, a good
father!

No, I do not forget! There in that valley
Named for the Holy Cross, I see in
vision
The little church you built, first monu-
ment
To rise upon the plain in verity
To prove the Risen Christ! Now two-
score years
Have put their marks of wind and
weather on it,
But still it stands, those hand-hewn tim-
bers firm
Upon their base, those joists so staunchly
joined
That age and usage cannot shake their
setting;
Still from that cross-tipped spire the little
bell
Rings out its summons thro' the parish
bounds,
To gather in the sons and children's
children
Of that far day when your strong voice
commanded,
And your still stronger arm lifted and
guided

The last great beam of that first prairie
chapel.
And in they troop; and if, among them
now,
Few there may be who keep you in re-
membrance—
None but that dear and only sister left,
And that one brother who remains to-
day,
(And, in the choir loft, those who know
your worth,
And mingle thoughts of you in chant
and hymnal)—
Still there is one, one unforgetting
Friend,
One Comrade of those early days whom
time
Can never change, whose loyalty is
deathless,
Whose love is Life itself, whose com-
radeship
Has been your constant help—aye, there
is One
Who never will forget. There on the
altar,
There in that tabernacle that your hands
Built of the insensate, now all sacred,
wood,
He is, in plenteous grace. Your hands,
my father,
Built Him this roof; and He will still
remember

There was a time when doors were
closed against Him,
"No room within!" Your skill, my
father, fashioned
This shelter and this little sanctuary,
And He will not forget that time there
was
When He had not whereon to lay His
Head.

O little church, on the Wisconsin prairie,
Where the rich valley of the Holy Cross
Pays tribute to the fruitful sun, you call
me
Many a time when thro' the hurrying
city
I hasten on my way and hear bells ring-
ing—
You call me to your humble sanctuary;
And many a time, tho' plain and peak
may sunder,
I kneel within your hallowed quiet.
There
I entered first the portals of the chosen,
When sacramental waters, given in
baptism,
Regenerated me. There first I heard
The sweetly solemn music of the organ
And listened to uplifted voices singing.
I see you now, O little church, well
named
After that saint upon whose feast my
father

First saw the light! St. Patrick, great
Apostle
Of Christ's unfailing Faith! Behold the
tribute,
My father, in his strong prime, paid his
patron;
True sign he loved and honored that fair
name
His natal day bestowed him. You, O
saint
Of Tara's Hill, whom Erin's sons re-
member
With love and praise—you brought to
Druid Ireland
The light of Truth, the bounty of God's
presence.
Behold! one son bearing your noble name
Gave of his best, his all, to lift the same
Tri-signet cross above the prairie pines,
Thus bearing on the undying fire you
lighted
On Tara's summit and all Ireland's
hills;—
So praising God through you, his great
Apostle!
Pray for my father, O St. Patrick! Bles-
sings
Ask the good Christ for him with every
stroke
Of that far prairie bell. Fill all the
heavens
With prayers and blessings for him, O
good people,
Kneeling to God beneath the roof he
builded!

Mass over, surely you remember, folks,
How the wide church-yard thronged with
people! Sunday
Was a long week's event in those old
days;
Then neighbors met for friendly chat and
gossip,
Stored up, since last the whirring wheels
of buggies
And Sunday rigs and democrats and
buckboards
Broke rudely, with swift clouds of dust,
upon
The housewife's gossip, or new jelly
recipe,
Or youths' and maidens' all self-con-
scious silence,
Or farmers' talk of crops and cattle
sales:—
O, all the world was centred there, and
sorrow
Was given sweet surcease in friendly
words,
The Sunday guest was greeted and made
known
To cousins and relations (by the dozen),
The price of wheat was argued, and
potatoes
Were championed as next year's banner
crop.
The widow's tears sprung fresh upon
the sight
Of stalwart men who but a week before

Had borne her life-companion to the
grave;
And by her smiled the new-made mother,
proud
To show her hushling baby to the
women,
While sage advice was poured into her
ears,
And questions asked and answered with
that wisdom
The heritage of mothers since first Eve
Nursed Adam's sons. Life, pulsant and
refulgent,
Hummed in the churchyard, while the
roses bloomed
And filled the paths with all the sum-
mer splendor
Of sunny June.

And then all warningless
A wind came stirring from the grove
of oaks
And blew the bending roses till the grass
Was strewn with flowery snow. And
so our eyes
Follow the warning finger of the wind
And seek the grave-yard's grassy slopes,
where sleep
Those who await us, yet whose memory
Remains as living as the verdant sod
That marks their corporal resting place.
Beneath
This slender marble shaft, all mellowed
now

And stained with age, the dust of loved
ones lies,

A father's mother, whom I never saw;
A brother and two little baby sisters.
How often have I knelt beside that plot
And prayed for them, the while my won-
dering fancy

Strove to make pictures of the might-
have-been.

These were the first graves I had known.
Yet death

Spoke never from them in its bitterness,
For rest and hushed repose, among the
roses,

Or underneath the quiet of the snows,
Breathed round about. Ah! graves have
opened since

To dull my heart and darken all my
vision;

Yet now, with some of life's long lessons
learned,

Those first graves ever seem to bring
the truer

And holier message. Rather this—the
thought

Of them has helped me grasp the heavy
meaning

Of graves that hold hearts of my actual
knowledge.

No grave was ever opened to receive
The silent dead that did not, too, enclose
Some of the very heart-core of the living.

So runs the tale! Death in the midst
of life!

The living crowd all busy with its talk-
ing,

Laughs in reply beside the sleeping
throng;

But even rarest gossip has an end,
And tired young mothers must haste
home again,

And farmers to their stock, and lovers
hurry

To keep their tryst—and widows, heavy
hearted,

Must turn their weary feet once more
to hearths

That coldly wait: “Up, Dick! Whoa,
Jenny!”—“Hurry!”

The road resounds with voice and whirr
of wheels,

And all the world is for a little while
A dust cloud! Down we go, with call-
ing voices,

Along the rattling road, and leave be-
hind

The church and churchyard, soon—how
well I know it—

To brood in strange and solitary quiet
Through all the long, bright Sunday,
and the days

Of plow, or harvest, till the bell again
Summons the prairie people to the altar.
Yet, One remains; and, in the wondrous
quiet

That broods about, that little church and
 churchyard
Seem suddenly the land of heart's desire,
The domain of the disenthralled, the
 gateway
Of wide eternity itself.

 But down the road
The spokes spin and the hoofs make
 merry clatter.
I know the old road well. To-day re-
 turning,
I'd look for Padden's store and once
 again
Know the good smacking taste of ginger
 snaps:
For many a time you bought us ginger-
 snaps
On the way home from Mass. That I
 remember,
And the white cottage hidden in the
 bushes
Between the "Corners" and the church.
 And now
I vaguely see the old bent bearded man
Who greeted us from out the cottage
 gateway.
One other memory of early Sundays
I keep secure—the days when fate de-
 creed
We children stay at home. But solemn
 service
Was celebrated still, the round-turned
 legs

Of our toy-table, stately candlesticks,
Cigar boxes our altar, and a towel,
(The brighter-patterned and the deeper
fringed

The better) for our vestment. The re-
turn

From Mass we watched with eager wish
and wonder,

Hoping for "goodies" or, far better still,
Some cousin's visit. If the cousin
came—

And truly then, "the more the merrier,"
What escapades we had in that red cart,
Disk-wheeled, you made for us! And O,
the wonder

Of watching swallows build their 'dobe
houses

Under the barn eaves; or the martens
fly

Out from the bird-house, and dart in
again.

And there were straw-piles for the
wildest slides,

Where only clouds of chaff could drown
our shrieks,

Of Indian-like delight; then hay-loft
plunges,

When from the dizzy rafters down we
leaped

Upon the prickly hay. That took more
daring

Than hunting eggs, or chasing little
pigs—

Unless a sharp-beaked setting hen defied
us,
Or angry sow snapped grunting at our
heels.
Out in the apple orchard, O what finds
Of wind-fallen, juicy-hearted, golden
crabs,
Or mealy "winters"!

Ah, how memory
Revives the past; the world takes on
the hues
Of that bright portulaca bed, the pride
Of all the women folks. O happy days!
Sweet days of wild flowers, plucked when
barefooted
We went across the fields with dinner
pails,
Finding wild roses and sweet-william
by the furrow.
O, what a thorny way it was when feet,
All flower-belated, must make haste
across
The cruel stubble! Roses then had
thorns;—
And life had lessons, tho' we knew it
not.
The day returning from the fields, I saw
A green snake dart between the sun-
scorched stones
Out in the trodden pasture, lives still
vivid
And makes the sight of crawling creat-
ures still

So sense-aborrent that I shudder at it.
And when, pray, will I ever mount a
horse
Without recalling that dread hour of
terror
When from the back of our old dapple,
Fanny,
Plodding her well-known way from bars
to stable,
I fell, amid the clatter of the harness,
Into the mud—and fairly died of fright?
To-day she browses in Elysian pastures.
Curly, the dog, whose dumb fidelity
Made change of masters, death, is dead
and gone
These many years, and even his silky
coat
That made a cap for his new owners—
(O,
How heartless that grim fate seemed
then to me!),
Has served its time. The little disk-
wheeled cart,
Whose red was faded by the rain to
pink,
Made kindling, with the little bird-house
sharing
It's axy fate. What tragedies those
were!
And time has never healed their poig-
nancy!

How memory beguiles me, on and on!
The moving finger writes, the Past re-
lives

In passing panorama. So it is
Thro' all my waking days there center
'round

The thought of you, these pictures of the
Past;

Thirst brings me bending o'er the well
again;

Hot city pavements lure my feet in
wishing

Down elm-green lanes, o'er cool dark
kitchen floors;

And tempting pitchers of the lemonade
That mother mixed so magically, tease
My reminiscent taste with icy tinkle
And beady sweat. O, once again to wear
A big straw hat, with dripping rhubarb
leaves

Doused with the well's clear brew,
packed in its crown!

O, happy days of bird and brook and
rose-leaf!

O smiling days of boyhood, gone for-
ever!

LOST LITTLE BOY.

O little boy, how pure you are, how fair!
And what a wonder in your big gray eyes,
Like to the heavens, when sweet suns
surprise
The silver rains! I see you laughing there
Light-heart, so far away! No cloud of care
Has crossed the sunny April of your skies.
Ah, how the world has changed! My sore
heart cries
For one brief little day your joy to share!

Lost little boy, I love you as of old,
And all the dear companions of your day;
But, ah, how futilely for you I sigh!
Yet in the night my world-worn hands I
fold
And kneel me down to the Great Lord to
pray—
For all that's good of me, sweet boy, is
you, so fair, so high!

PART II

Faces and places are soon forgot
In the pride of life's endeavor,
But the home of the child, be it palace or cot,
Lives on in the mind forever.

—James Riley.

HOW evening rested quietly and still
Upon the dewy lawn! The moon
came up

Over the eastern groves, and silvered all
The dreamy world, and made more sil-
very still

The music of sweet horns we listened to,
Played on by magic breath within the
grove.

Clear on the silence, falling when the
horns

Ceased their far cries and melody of
bugling,

Broke a shrill monotone from the still
pond,

The hymnal of the frogs. The sylvan
town

Scarce stirred within its shadowy shel-
ter. Stars

Beamed steady in the great untroubled
sky,

The while the clear moon rode her
wonted course.

And now, perhaps, a cool wind, rising
up,

Makes mother and aunt Minnie draw
their aprons

Over their shoulders. "It is growing
cool!"

Still silence reigns. Then far along
the night

A warning engine cry, and soon the
darkness

Is pierced and cloven with a meteor,
The quiet shattered by the rumbling
noise
Of whirring steel across the shuddering
bridge.
Out from the engine's throat the smoke
and sparks
Belch forth, lit by the sudden livid
glow
Of fireman's open door—as sudden
closed;
And like a frightened terror, on and
on
The night Express speeds on its way,
soon lost
Behind the echoing hills. 'Tis bed-
time now.

The days grow shorter and the wind
more cool,
Till evenings in the open air give away
To fireside hours. The frost comes,
and the snow,
And winter rules in bitter winds that
drift
The snow against the window-panes,
and frost
That paints the glass fantastic with its
scrolls.
When with warm breath we blow upon
the pane
And clear away the feathery congeal-
ment
To peer into the night, behold a world

Brought to a wondrous pause upon its
way

All still beneath the mystic witchery
Of winter! Blue and pale it lies en-
thralled,

Dumbly submissive to the buffet-breath
Of polar blasts, yet strangely beauti-
ful

In all its utter hush. Turn we again
Back to the fire, the reading lamp, the
books,

Or mayhap to the puzzling strategy
Of checker-board. Dear evening hours
at home!

Ah! many a world-worn heart would
give, to-night,

A brilliant barter of triumphant nights
For one brief hour of your good, peace-
ful quiet.

The checker-board—life wrought in
miniature,

With wisdom's slow reward made ac-
tual

In king-rows—man's resources—kept
intact,

And folly's giddy way brought to con-
fusion.

The victory was never mine!—but I
Learned more than checker playing at
the game.

Study there was—and books always al-
lured me.

("Only this page to finish," was the cry

At bedtime always). So now, best of all,
I like to think of that small reading circle

Our household made, when, gathered all
together,

We laughed at Peter Pepper's wild adventures

In Ireland—read aloud. But over all
The books, and better even than my
Shakespeare,

Were those old tales you told of Ireland,
father!

You have forgotten them, perchance,
nor mind the telling;

But not so I! Those stories still live
on

In memory, a constant source of pleasure,

And all the wondrous land of glens and
fairies

Of moonlit abbey ruins and of bridges
Built by the "good people"—Ballyhadereen,

Loch Gara, with its fiddling lads aferrying

The lassies over,—the "Big House,"—
the rooks

And owls that made the abbey tower
dreadful

With ghostly portent; all, all this remains,

The land I mapped all clear in my
young mind's eye

While eager ears were hearkening to
your stories;
'Tis just as fresh and green in my imagining
As in your youthful memory. Nor ever
Can heavy winds go soaring thro' the
night
But I, almost in childish terror, live
The "Night of the Big Wind" over
again;
I hear the scream and booming of the
tempest,
The rattle of the flying slate-roof shingles,
The roar of all the wild, unearthly tumult
That sails along the gale, as if old ocean
Himself in anger, came to sweep your
threshold.
"An awful night at sea!" I hear you say.
"Great shipping scattered and destroyed." All Ireland
Was filled with fugitives from off the
sea,
And ballad singers were abroad, recounting
The havoc of the wind. Now, thro' the
black
And shivering night, I see the men out,
tying
The oat stacks down, and fastening
the house roofs

To save them. Then a wilder, fiercer
crying
Comes on the wind's voice, and a sudden
crash!
And tumbling from the chimney falls a
stone!
It struck "Aunt Peggy" on the head:—
see! I remember!
Do you remember this? A little lad,
Sudden awakening in the night-stilled
house
And finding himself utterly alone.
Out, terrified, he leaped, and sped away
Across the fields, white, naked, like a
fairy,
And frightening all the rabbits in the
furze,
Crying his grief and terror to the winds
Till loving arms—the arms he sought—
secured him!

Now, far at sea, a sailing ship appears,
With precious freight—one of those argosies
Of hope and sorrow, bitterness and joy,
Poor stricken Ireland set upon the sea
To find their way to "rainbow's end!"
The storms
Lash the loud sea to yawning rage; the
wind
Blows every way but journey's way; the
stars
And all the heavens are blotted out in
darkness.

Sick and despairing grow the once brave
exiles,
So pitiless the power of Heaven seems
turning
Against their every hope and prayer.
Yet one,
A young lad, busy with his tools of trade
When need finds use for them, makes
hearts look up
And smile and take new courage from
the lesson
Youth teaches. Friends he makes, and
cheer he brings
Wherever his light steady step and eyes
Of smiling candor go. The same lad
grows
In strength and sinew (honoring the
calling
Of Nazareth's good Saint), till man-
hood's years
Are won. The days speed on; the New
West calls
And so the far Wisconsin prairie wins
The best of Canada. O men and women
Who braved the frontier, never counting
cost
Of ease and comforts given for the ma-
king
Of hearts and homes! O pioneers!
What poem
Can tell your worth! What song can
sing the courage
Of tender women, out upon the prairie!

Armies win martial glory, statesmen live
In stirring words on history's bright
pages,

But Fame's far splendor, nor the soldier's
glory

Can ever measure all the honor due
The pioneer—the quiet men and women
Who made the new land home! You
were the builders!

Church, spire, and many a roof attest it!
Yet

In our old home are prizes far more
precious

That tell one's skill in Joseph's goodly
trade,

And speak the magic of a mother's pres-
ence.

No need to tell—your father was before
you

A carpenter and cabinet-maker, deft

In all the arts of his important trade

That made the builder, in his day, the
carver

Of bed as well as beam, of chair and
table

As well as roof and floor. Nor need to
say

The gentle art of making home was
learned,

The nimble finger trained in needles' art,
Dear mother, long before the prairie
won you.

For there the little farm-house in the
trees
Stood as a landmark for all travelers—
“The house that has the curtains”; and
the guest
Found a sweet gentlewoman’s magic
spell
Making “a garden in the wilderness.”

St. Patrick’s day again! The winter,
passing,
Gives glimpses of the green beneath, as if
A pledge that Ireland’s shamrocks still
are growing.
Come, then, pin on your green, and let
us go
Out to the “Corners” for the celebration.
Rich oratory rings along the rafters,
And from the organ-loft the stirring
notes
Of “Patrick’s Day,” “The Wearing of
the Green,”
“Faith of Our Fathers”—and then, “God
Save Ireland”
Sweep thro’ our Irish hearts! And lo,
once more
The best thoughts of the past return, the
years
Long fled, renew, the world grows young
again!

Then "God Save Ireland" say we all of
us,

And God save you and bless you boun-
tifully!

St. Patrick's rarest blessings all be yours.
O may the sorrows of your heart be few,
And always like the sorrows of old Ire-
land,

With Hope's bright rainbow ever shin-
ing thro',

And may your joys and blessing be as
many

And all as beautiful as all the sham-
rocks

In all of Ireland, with the dew upon
them!

St. Patrick's day again, God bless us;
surely

This is the night then for potato cake—
Potato Cake! Ah, surely, one forgets
The sharp points of this life when
creamy patties,

Swimming in golden butter, piping hot,
Melt in one's mouth. Potato cake!

There's not

In all of Ireland, nor the whole world
over

One who can make potato cake like you,
Mother,—no Irish blarney this, I tell you!

Only a little of the dear old story
Have I reviewed. Thoughts throng with
memory,

Words rush to picture all the past, and
heart

Warms and beats higher in remembering.

Now comes the blessed Christmas time
again,

The time when all hearts hark them back
to home,

When families gather—if God be so
kind—

And sons and daughters, parents and
their children,

Assemble 'round the board. I count the
days

Till I may be beneath the old home roof
With you once more, making the present

time

Better than best of "olden times." God
grant

We'll keep our Christmas—and our New
Year, too,

As now we plan, together, happy, glad

Of blessings many, and so light of heart

That "Merry Christmas" is the only word

Can tell our story. Until then, "Good-
night"

I call across the country, knowing well

That all my thoughts, wherever I may

roam,

Will be for you, the dear old folks back

home.

A VOICE IN THE CITY.

Draw the veil closer, closer! I would fain,
Forever in the vision land remain!
There is a shielding sense of peace I crave,
Of shelter from the bruising world. The
grave

Alone, perhaps, can truly give it me;
For then my spirit, freed, may range the sea
And, love-attended by unfettered dreams,
Know the sweet Truth beyond May-be and
Seems.

Draw the veil closer! Take me quickly now
O pilot on the dream-ship's starlit prow!
Save me, I cry! The iron is entering in,
And soon my soul will only hear the din
Of black machinery. For all too soon
My life-pulse throbs to this discordant tune,
Beating so tirelessly, my dulling sense
Will yet mark music in its clashing tense,
And, deafened to the song of star and flower,
Bend and be broken in its crushing power.
Draw the veil closer! Save me from the day
That dreadfully impends, when, far away,
The waves of my dear sea in vain will weave
The song I love so well. O let me leave
This alien place before I utterly die!
For even now my soul makes feeble cry!

[Written for the eightieth birthday of my father, Patrick Phillips, March 17, 1908. First published for private circulation, December, 1908; reprinted August, 1911; third edition, November, 1911.]

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